



CHRISTIAN FEBIGER

COLONEL OF THE VIRGINIA LINE OF THE CONTINENTAL ARMY

By Henry P. Johnston

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Colonel Christian Febiger, although a native of Denmark, may be regarded not so much as one of those distinctively "foreign officers" who came to this country during the progress of the struggle to assist in securing American independence, as a European friend, who, if not altogether a colonist, had so far lived among and become attached to the American people as to share in the sense of their grievances and join with them in the contest from the outset. He is to be remembered as an officer who rendered extensive and noteworthy services during the Revolution.

From authentic records touching his personal history, we learn that Febiger was born on the island of Funen, Denmark, in the year 1746. It is probable that about his sixteenth year his father died, as he speaks of having been his own master since that age, while his mother was still living at Funen in 1786. It is certain that he received an early military education, possibly at Copenhagen, where he had friends, and that while still a young man he accompanied an uncle who had been appointed governor of the island of Santa Cruz, West Indies, as one of his staff. Whether he there decided to abandon a military career and attempt some mercantile ventures on his own account does not appear, but the next we hear of him, he is traveling, in 1772, through the American colonies, from Cape Fear in North Carolina to the Penobscot in Maine, stopping and making observations "in every town and port," inquiring into the resources of the country and noting its actual products. This journey seems to have left a favorable impression, and during the two following years, as he informs us himself, he was "commercially engaged in the Eastern States in the lumber, fish and horse trade."

Febiger was doubtless prospering in business when the war broke out, and the war necessarily completely interrupted it. He was evidently established at the time either in Boston, Salem, or a neighboring coast town, as it was from this vicinity that he first joined the Colonial forces. His sympathies with the Massachusetts people must have been sincere and ardent, or he could not have involved himself so early in the struggle. He seems to have had no hesitation in the matter. Nor can we suppose that he rushed

in for the sake of military adventure—his entire career showing that he had the cause of the Colonists much at heart. Being a trained soldier, he offered his services in the emergency, and they were accepted. The record here, unfortunately, is meagre, but we have the fact that ten days after the Lexington alarm, or April 28, 1775, he joined Colonel Samuel Gerrish's Massachusetts State Militia Regiment, composed of companies from Essex and Middlesex counties. A little later he appears as its Adjutant—the exact date of his appointment, so far as known, not being preserved—and the regiment took its place in the cordon of raw troops drawn around the British regulars in Boston. The fact that he received the Adjutancy indicates that he already had friends and some influence either in or about Boston, and that he was known as a person familiar with the subject of military organization.

The battle of Bunker Hill soon followed. There Febiger first developed his courage and ability to command, which is nearly all that we know about him in connection with the affair. The struggle at Prescott's redoubt was progressing and Putnam was hastening troops to its support. "Among others," says Frothingham in his "Siege of Boston," "a part of Gerrish's regiment under Nihil marched from Cambridge to Ploughed Hill, where Adjutant Christian Febiger, a gallant Danish soldier who had seen service, took command, called upon the men to follow him, and reached the heights in season to render valuable service." Frothingham's authority for this incident seems to be the account of the battle by Swett, who gave many details from personal knowledge. There can be little doubt that Febiger distinguished himself on the occasion, as we find him appointed not long after to accompany Arnold's Quebec expedition, which included none but officers of approved conduct and known resolution. We may fairly assume that his Bunker Hill record was, in part at least, the reason of his selection in the latter case.

Here, again, in regard to the march to Quebec, our knowledge of Febiger's individual services is quite limited. The journals of some of his companions occasionally refer to him; that of Captain Thayer, of Rhode Island, establishing the fact that he was one of the two Adjutants in the expedition. A letter from Febiger to Colonel Meigs, written after the war, mentions the further fact that he made drafts of the route, which are unfortunately lost. The late Judge Henry, of Pennsylvania, a volunteer in the expedition, recalls the circumstance in his narrative, that one evening after a peculiarly exhausting march, he reached Febiger's camp-fire in a condition which excited the latter's sympathy. He was heartily welcomed to the mess and received with the usual camp tonic. "The heart of Febiger," says Henry, "seemed overjoyed at the relief he had and could afford us. The liquor had restored our fainting spirits, but this was not enough for his generosity to exhibit. He requested us to take seats around the fire, and wait the boiling of his kettle, which was well replenished with pork and dumplings. This was all devoted to our use, accompanied by an open-heartedness and the kindest expressions of interest for our sufferings, and regard for our perseverance in our duty as military men. This meal to all of us seemed a renewal of life. It was accustomed food. Febiger, ere this time, was unknown to us, but in the process of events, he acquired our esteem and entire confidence, as a friend and a real soldier." At the storming of Quebec, December 31, 1775, Febiger was taken prisoner with the greater part of his comrades, among whom were Morgan, Heth and Porterfield, of Virginia; Lamb, of New York; Meigs, of Connecticut; Greene, of Rhode Island, and others, and with whom he was confined until released on parole in August, 1776. On September 11 following the prisoners reached New York, landed near Elizabeth, New Jersey, and on the 1st of January, 1777, were regularly exchanged, the preference in the exchange being given them over all others.

Upon his release from parole, Febiger immediately re-entered the service by accepting a commission in the Virginia Continental line. The reasons which inclined him to go to that State do not appear, but it is quite probable that the friendships he had formed during the Quebec expedition had something to do with it, as the regiment which he joined was officered largely by old Virginia comrades in captivity, who may have induced him to share the fortunes of war thereafter with themselves. However this may be, we find that Richard Henry Lee recommended him for a position in the new line, that the House of Delegates appointed him, November 13, 1776, a Lieutenant-Colonel, and that soon after he was assigned to the Eleventh Virginia Continentals, of which Daniel Morgan was Colonel. John Marshall, the future Chief Justice, was its Adjutant, and among the Captains we have McGuire, Bruin, Porterfield and Henry, all Quebec heroes, although the latter was prevented by illness from serving. Febiger and Major Heth, afterwards Colonel in the same line, leave on record a manly letter to the Virginia House, signed by each November 15, in which they acknowledge the honor of their appointments, but regret that "the peculiarity and delicacy of their situation will neither admit of their immediate acceptance, or allow them to

acknowledge themselves in such terms as they would wish to use. They can only say that whenever they are at liberty to accept of their appointments, and once more step forth in defence of their bleeding and much injured country, their utmost abilities and warmest endeavors shall ever be fully exerted in preserving that honor which the Virginians have in every instance, during the present contest, most justly acquired.” They were released from their paroles, as already stated, a few weeks later—January 1st following.

The Eleventh Virginia seems to have been raised mainly in the vicinity of Winchester, Virginia, Morgan’s home, where we infer from one of his letters that Febiger repaired to assist in recruiting. Early in the spring of 1777 it marched in two detachments for Headquarters in New Jersey. There the new army was gathering, but all too slowly, and Washington was compelled to call for the troops from the recruiting stations as soon as they formed in companies, to enable him to keep up some show of a front against the enemy, who were now threatening to move upon him. Under these instructions Lieutenant Colonel Febiger started from Virginia, February 23, 1777, in advance of Morgan, bringing with him “the first division” of the regiment, and on March 6 he was in Philadelphia. A little later we find him in camp and then marching and fighting with the army in the Pennsylvania campaign.

From Colonel Febiger’s Order Books—those invaluable guides in the study of Revolutionary history—it is possible to trace his movements throughout the war with considerable particularity. His first camp appears to have been at Princeton, New Jersey, and his first regimental order, dated April 16, the approval of a court martial sentence punishing a soldier for disorderly conduct; the interesting item here being that Lieutenant Marshall was one of the members of the court, who was also directed, as Adjutant, to see that the drummers were duly provided with “Cats and cord” for the whipping. Was this the judge’s first experience in dispensing justice for national ends? After Princeton, the regiment is at Bridge water and Bound Brook, where on April 17, it furnishes the guard on Quibble Town road. About this time, also, Colonel Morgan arrives from Virginia with the remainder of the regiment and assumes command, to hold it only for a short time, however, as on June 13, he was put at the head of that famous corps of riflemen which did so much in bringing Burgoyne to terms. The only regimental order to the Eleventh Virginia which can be distinguished as his own runs as follows:

Regtl Orders.

May 15th 1777.

That the Captains make out their several muster Rolls from the first of January last and that a copy of each be sent to Colo Morgan’s Quarters at 8 o’clock tomorrow morning — All their Muster Rolls to be made out by Saturday 10 o’clock in order that their companies may be mustered. The Captns are to see that their diffit compts keep their Tents and the streets before their tents clean, the dirt and trash to be swept in one place & the Quarter Master Sergt order their Camp Couler men to take it out and burn it. The officers and non commissd offrs are desird to order all stinking meat and bones to be cleand from about Camp. The officers to pay the strictest attention to prevent the soldiers from taking their gunlocks to pieces to clean them as a number of good locks have been spoil’d by that infamous practice. That no Soldier leaves the Camp without leave from a field officer. That no officer absents himself from Camp without leave from the Commander of the Regt. The Regt. to parade at 4 o’clock in the afternoon.

Daniel Morgan.

In the arrangement of the army for the campaign, the regiment, now again under Febiger’s command, was assigned to General Woodford’s Brigade in General Stephen’s Division, composed entirely of Virginia troops. It was engaged in the battles of Brandywine and Germantown, shared in the experiences at Valley Forge, and was present in the following year, at the victory of Monmouth. It is to be regretted that but little is to be found respecting Febiger’s individual services at this period, but we may assume that he participated honorably, if not with distinction, upon each occasion, proving himself the thorough soldier in action. That he was in the thick of the fight at Brandywine, and kept his men under good discipline throughout the trying campaign, appears from the following order entered by himself in the Regimental Order Book:

The Commanding officer takes this opportunity of returning his publick Thanks to the Officers and Soldiers in the Regiment for their spirited and gallant behaviour on the nth of Sept last and can without Flattery assure them that their conduct, adherence to Order and Discipline by far exceeded his most Sanguine Expectations and makes no Doubt but if again call'd to Action, he will have it in his power to say, that their Conduct would do honor to veterans Lt. John Marshall to take Care and Command of the late Wm. Smith's Company till further Orders—

The Commanding officers of Companies will dayly examine the Men's Arms and Accoutrements and see that they are all ways prepar'd for Action according to repeated general orders. No Officer or Soldier, when on a March is to leave his platoon or Division without Leave from the Commanding Officer. Water as usual to be fetch'd by the Serpts—Roll Call to be more strictly adher'd to than has lately been observ'd.

A proportionable Distribution of Tents to be made this Night by Major Sneed—if any soldier is found stragling out of Camp, the Commanding Officer will be oblig'd to take the Officer for the man, as the present Strength enables them to keep a strict eye over the whole.

Two weeks after Brandywine, or September 26th, 1777, Lieutenant Colonel Febiger was honored with promotion to the Colonelcy of the Second Virginia Regiment of the line, at the head of which he remained until the close of the war. His new command, however, he appears not to have assumed until after the battle of Germantown, which occurred October 4. At this battle his brigade was on the right of Greene's wing and assisted in the attempted reduction of the Chew House, which proved a fatal obstruction to American success. The marching orders received by Stephen's Division the day before the action, and the congratulatory order issued to the army the day after are interesting reminiscences of that field. The former runs briefly as follows:

The men of Genl. Stephens Division to be paraded Under Arms at 6 o'clock this afternoon—to be stript of their Baggage & Blankets—to have their provisions in their Haversacks—Such as have not Haversacks to put their provision in their pockets. Out of each Brigade a Careful Subten & Twenty men least fit for duty to be left with the Baggage as a Guard.

The second order is in part to this effect:

Head Qrs, *Octr 5th 1777. Officers of the day tomorrow.* Major Genl Stephens, Brigadier Muchlinburg, Col Clark & Lt Col Conner, B. M. Peers. *Officer for Piquet* Majr Miller.

***** The Commander in Chief returns his thanks to ye Genl Officers and Other Officers & men concern'd in ye attack yesterday on ye Enemy's left wing for the spirit & Bravery they manifested in driving ye enemy from field to field. Tho an unfortunate fog joined with the smoak prevented the different Brigs from seeing & supporting Each other & from some other not yet known Causes they finally Retreated, we nevertheless see that the Enemy are not proof against a vigorous attack and may be put to flight when Boldly pushed. This they will remember and assure themselves on the next occasion by proper Exertion of the powers which God has given them, and Inspired by the cause of freedom in which they are Engaged they will be Victorious.

The Commander-in-Chief not seeing the engagement on the Enemy's Right Wing desires the Genl Officers who Commanded there to thank those officers who behaved with Becoming Bravery & such in either wing as behaved otherwise are to be Reported.

At the battle of Monmouth, June 28, 1778, Febiger may have had temporary command of the Virginia line, as he speaks of having been at the head of "four thousand men and two pieces of artillery." These troops, however, being drawn up with the main army under Washington, after Lee's retreat and disgrace, were not brought into close action. In August following, the Colonel was ordered to Philadelphia to superintend the making up of clothing for the Virginia regiments, and the next we hear of him is in connection with the assault on Stony Point on the night of July 15, 1779.

The part Colonel Febiger took in this famous affair is well known. He commanded the First of the four Light Infantry regiments organized for the campaign, and led the right column in the attack under

Wayne. Six of the eight companies of his regiment were selected from the Virginia line, and two were Pennsylvanians. The other two field officers were Lieutenant-Colonel Fleury and Major Thomas Posey. The selection of Febiger and all the officers of the corps was the highest possible compliment to their military qualities, as none but superior and experienced men were accepted for the special service in view. All proved their worth at Stony Point. Butler, Febiger, Meigs, Fleury, Sherman, Hay, Hull, Murphree, Stewart and Posey, the field officers engaged on the occasion, and representing the States of Pennsylvania, Virginia, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland and North Carolina, were noticed in Wayne's orders as having done all that soldiers could do. Colonel Febiger leaves two letters in regard to the affair, both written to his wife, which are highly interesting—the one, dated from Stony Point just after the assault, being a laconic expression of the evident enthusiasm he felt over the achievement:

My Dear Girl: I have just borrowed pen, ink and paper to inform you that yesterday we march'd from Fort Montgomery, and at 12 o'clock last night we stormed this confounded place, and, with the loss of about fourteen killed and forty or fifty wounded, we carried it. I can give you no particulars as yet. A musquet ball scraped my nose. No other damage to "Old Denmark." God bless you.

Farewell—

Febiger.

"Old Denmark," as he seems to have been called, was made field officer of the day for the 16th, and on the 21st, true to his promise, enters into details as follows:

Fort Montgomery, July 21, 1779.

My Dear Girl—

I'll now give you the particulars of our enterprize. After having reconnoitred Stony Point well, we saw that by a secret and bold stroke it might perhaps be carried—and our affairs being in a critical situation induced his Excellency to risk it—and on Thursday the 15th instant we marched very secretly, securing all passes and preventing Country people from going in—and at dark were within one mile of the Fort, where we lay till 12 o'clock at night, when my regiment at the head of the right column, and Colonel Butler's at the head of the left, with proper "forlorn hope" and advanced guards, marched and attacked the works, who received us pretty warmly. But the bravery of our men soon overcame all dangers, and about 1 o'clock we were in full possession of the Fort, where I had the pleasure of taking Colonel Johnson, who Commanded, myself, and ordered him to his tent. At daybreak we found we had taken 1 Lieut-Colonel, 25 Captains & Lieutenants and 544 non-commissioned officers and privates, exclusive of the killed and some that drowned in endeavoring to get to their shipping—We took 16 pieces of Artillery with fixed Ammunition for a three months siege—2 standards & 1 flag—10 Marquees—and a large quantity of tents, Quartermaster's stores, baggage, &c., &c.

His Excellency joined us in the afternoon—when an attack was to be made on the other side— but through some difficulties it was delayed. We remained there three days,, which were employed in Cannonading the Enemy and removing the stores—and on the evening of the 18th we evacuated and destroyed the works, and set fire to the remains.

This obliged General Clinton to come up with his whole army to King's Ferry, where he now is. What may be his next move we cannot as yet ascertain. If he intends for our Fort, I think he will be damnably drubbed, as this most glorious affair has given double vigor and spirit to our men.

Farewell

Febiger.

The opportunity for further distinguishing itself was not again offered to the Corps of Light Infantry during the campaign, and in December it was disbanded—Febiger returning with increased reputation to his old regiment in the line.

In 1780 the Colonel entered a field of new experiences. While yielding few of the honors which a soldier usually covets, they still discovered him to be one of the truly valuable men in the service. During the early part of the year the entire Virginia line was ordered to the southward to report, to General Lincoln at Charleston. By the surrender of that place to the British in May, the Americans suffered the loss of two thousand Continentals, some seven hundred of whom were Virginians. Another detachment of Virginians from the northern army, under Colonel Buford, escaped capture at that time only to fall a prey to Tarleton

and his legion. These accidents of war cut off the Virginia Continentals. The line as such was in effect destroyed, and the State was compelled to proceed to the organization of a new force to represent her. Among the many officers who happened not to have been at the Charleston surrender were General Muhlenberg, Colonels Febiger, Davies, Greene, Porterfield, Major Posey, and others, which proved to be a most fortunate circumstance for the State, as their services were now greatly needed in recruiting the new regiments. It was in this service that Febiger was destined to continue much of the time until the close of the war. During the winter and spring of 1780-81, however, he was engaged in other special and important duties, to which some reference must be made.

General Muhlenberg, having been placed in charge of the recruiting in Virginia, despatched Colonel Febiger to Philadelphia to forward arms and clothing to the State, which seemed to be destitute of everything. The Colonel's orders for this duty were dated September 1, 1780. Meanwhile, before he was able to do much for Virginia, General Greene had assumed command of the Department of the South, succeeding Gates, and finding Febiger at Philadelphia, directed him, November 2, to turn his energies to the matter of sending needed stores, not only to Virginia, but beyond to the now distressed and disorganized Southern army in North Carolina.

In this new position of forwarder of supplies for the troops who were soon to become a new force under Greene, Febiger developed the requisite executive capacity. He seems to have been as good a business man or man of affairs as he was a soldier and fighter, appearing especially to have adapted himself with remarkable readiness and tact to American ways and methods. It was no slight compliment to him, for instance, that he, a foreigner, should have been entrusted, as was the case, by General Greene with the delicate duty of seeing that leading men, both in and out of Congress, kept their promises in regard to supplying his army; for Congress at that time was put to its wits' end to keep any army, north or south, on a living footing, and Quartermasters, Commissaries or Paymasters, who obtained half they applied for, were fortunate indeed.

Although details of military stores—wagons, horses, tents, clothing, arms, accoutrements, ammunition and what not—usually furnish the duller of all chapters in the study of a campaign, we cannot but take a special interest in this department as Colonel Febiger conducted it, for, first of everything, Greene depended upon supplies to repair Southern disasters, and enable him to undertake the operations which saved the South. Febiger fully appreciated the situation, and began sending forward stores shortly after Greene left him. The distance was great and time precious. From twenty-five to thirty days were required for a loaded train to go from Philadelphia to the shifting army in North Carolina. If trains could have followed each other at brief intervals, the troops would have suffered little discomfort; but there were vexing and hazardous delays in starting them off. Wagons seem to have been as hard to get as stores to the northward, and in Virginia they were even a greater scarcity. Nor could the most direct routes always be taken. From Philadelphia to Richmond the shortest road ran in nearly a straight line, via Head of Elk, Alexandria and Fredericksburg, but when the ferries were obstructed, trains were obliged to go by way of Lancaster and York in Pennsylvania, Fredericktown, Maryland, "Harper's Ferriage" and down to the east of the Blue Ridge. We find Febiger writing to the Deputy Quartermasters at nearly all the places on this route to lay in forage for the teams, and especially was this article to be collected at Red House in Virginia, not far from Ashby's Gap, "on account of the bad roads and great distance from Leesburgh to Fredericksburgh." Supplies of forage also were to be ready at Bowling Green or Lynch's Tavern, between Fredericksburgh and Richmond. A specimen of the Colonel's directions on this point appears in the following, addressed to Mr. Marsteller, Deputy Quarter Master at Lancaster, December 11th, 1780:

"As I shall be obliged to Send a Number of Waggons with Stores for the Southward through your Post during the course of the winter, I thought it necessary to give you this early Information, that a Supply of Forage & provision might be laid in at your post, which you are hereby directed to do, as also to give the Commissary of provision proper Notice of the contents of this Letter, Forrage is an article of the utmost Importance and particular attention must be paid to it—you will also see that the Ferry Boats on Susquehanah are kept in proper Order and Readiness for Transporting the Waggons across."

From Colonel Febiger's note book it would appear that the first installment of stores for Greene's army went off about November 30. He describes it as an Invoice "loaded on Board Nineteen Private Teams

under the Care and Conduct of Mr. John Walker.” It included a miscellaneous assortment of tents, camp kettles, spades, picks, knapsacks, haversacks, harness, etc. Wagon No. 1, John McCommons’, contained horse collars, back and belly bands, blind bridles and a box with “30 Faschine Hatchetts.” In Glasgow Bensteel’s wagon, No. 3, there were horsemen’s caps, saddles, and canteens. In wagon No. 7 there was a box containing 104 swords, and another with 251 pairs of horseshoes, 3 collars and 2 hay screws. The ninth wagon, James Willson’s, carried 200 camp kettles; the eighth, Hugh Dougherty’s, 157 spades and as many shovels; the twelfth, John Buntin’s, 33 common tents and 300 canteens; the eighteenth, Andrew Brackenridge’s, 200 dozen haversacks. This entire train the conductor, Walker, promised and obliged himself, unforeseen and unavoidable accidents excepted, to deliver to General Greene or other commanding officer in the Southern army, or to their order. To doubly assure himself, however, of the safety and dispatch of the invoice, Febiger concluded to put the whole, wagons and wagoners, under the charge of a Lieutenant Newberry. The Colonel’s instructions to him were sufficiently explicit, running as follows:

Philadelphia, December 3rd 1780

Sir

A considerable Quantity of very valuable Stores and of the greatest consequence to the Southern Army having been forwarded in 5 brigades of Waggons and being rather apprehensive of Neglect in the Waggon Conductors, I have thought it necessary to send an Officer to take charge of, superintend and direct the whole, for which purpose you are to proceed immediately on the Route pointed out to you, see that the Rear Brigades are in proper order, make the best speed and follow their direct route You are to see that the Conductors keep up the Greatest Order and Regularity on their March, that they always have their Waggons in a Compact Line and prevent either the waggoners or horses from doing any Injury to the Inhabitants on their Route. In Case, Contrary to my Expectations, the Enemy should still be in Chesapeake Bay and you should find it dangerous to follow the Route and cross the Ferrys pointed out to you, you are at liberty to alter it, but in this Case only. I shall in particular depend on your takeing the greatest care that none of the Stores are lost plundered or pillag’d, as also on your takeing every necessary precaution to prevent their Falling into the hands of the Enemy.

In case there should be any Post on the Route where Forrage or Provisions cannot be drawn or you should at any rate fall short, you will endeavour to procure it from the Inhabitants giving them Receipts for the same payable by the nearest Qr Mr or purchasing Commissary—and in case the Inhabitants should be unwilling to furnish you with Necessarys on these Terms when the Public Stores fall short, you’ll make application to the nearest magistrate or magistrates who are hereby requested to lend you every assistance in his or their power, agreeable to Law for that purpose provided, to forward the good of the Service.

After you reach Frederickburg you’ll endeavour to gett into Richmond a Day before Stewart s Brigade and there make Enquiry, whether General Greene or any other continental General or other Officer acting by his Order is there for the purpose of forwarding or directing the Route of Troops and Stores going to the Southern Army and receive his Instructions. If you can receive no Information there, proceed to Chesterfield Court house or Petersburg, and if no Directions shall be received in that Quarter, proceed by the nearest and most approv’d Route to General Greene’s head Quarters where you’ll deliver your Instructions and Invoice etc, and receive his further Orders for the Delivery of the Stores— All Q. Ms. Commissarys of provision or Forrage on your Route are directed to furnish you with every necessary assistance— Reposing the greatest Confidence in your faithfully discharging the important Trust committed to your Care I wish you a Safe and pleasant Tour.

Given as above,

Lt. Newberry.

Febiger.

On January 2, 1781, another large “invoice” of military stores was sent in twenty-three close covered wagons, under conduct of Thomas Scott and command of Captain Brown of Harrison’s artillery regiment, who, with his company, was on his way to report to General Greene. The load contained 573 stand of muskets with bayonets, 436 best new cartouch boxes, 300 do. for the Light Horse, 101 Sergeant’s swords and belts, besides ammunition, etc. About 400 much needed blankets were also included, some described as “small brown blankets,” and others as “small and large white do.” Although Captain Brown was directed to make “as much expedition as possible,” the train was delayed on the route, for one cause and another, more than two weeks longer than the ordinary time. At the Head of Elk six wagoners deserted with four horses and some stores. High prices and depreciation of the currency made it necessary to provide

the Captain in charge with thirty-five thousand dollars to defray the expenses of the train; those were times when moderate living in Philadelphia cost Febiger two hundred and twenty-five dollars per day.

Through January and February few supplies seem to have been obtainable. In any event the Colonel had a thankless task, as his correspondence shows. For instance, to Greene he writes, December 6, 1780:

I have endeavored to comply with your orders as far as in my power. All the Arms and Cartouch Boxes fit for use are gone on and almost every public store is Exhausted, especially the Q. M. Genl who has not another article demanded of him A Brig has arrived from France which left it in Company with the Ariel and another ship with Cloathing for this port—When they arrive I shall endeavour to Complete your order. After this I shall be obliged to send the Waggons by Lancaster as the Lower Ferry is impassable—if I have more Stores than Waggons, I will take a chance when the Bay is clear to send them around by water.

To Colonel Davies, chief recruiting officer at Chesterfield Court House, Virginia, he writes, January 1, 1781:

I am sorry that the miserable state of Our Finances renders me of less service to our Line or the Southern Army than I could wish. Butt I shall attack all Quarters and gett what I can. I have sent on a Considerable Quantity of various usefull Stores and assorted them as well as I could & I am extremely anxious to know in what manner they have arrived fearing Loss from want of Guards. Blanketts I never had the least prospect of untill this Day, when Congress have voted a sum to purchase a small number which I hope to forward immediately as also a few Coats Shirts & Shoes. I shall also send on some other Stores, of which Capt. Brown of the Artillery to whose Charge they are entrusted, will, on his arrival, deliver the Invoice.—I am sensible of all the Distresses of our Line and it Distracts me not to see the least flattering hope of Relief, and I fear nothing less than a Disolution of our whole army, unless Resources, which we already have in the Country, are called forth. I grant we have not clothing, but we have money Tobacco and other produce to purchase it with.

The Pennsylvania Line mutinied on the 1st instant—in the Foray two Officers and some men were killed—they took up their line of march, would suffer no officer except Wayne, Dick Butler & Walt Stewart to come near them. They have halted at Princeton, and the Governor has gone up to treat with them—the result is not yet known. Their Demands are extravagant & inadmissible, and their position if they design to join the Enemy is well chosen—however, from what I can learn I believe there is not much danger on that score.

To General Greene, January 18, 1781:

All our Dependance seems at present to be on Paul Jones who has been obliged to put back to France dismasted, but is now hourly expected. Some Cloathing of which the Blanketts is part has been purchas'd. I shall keep a constant Eye on them and gett them as soon as finishd. I don't know whether I wrote in my last that I sent you a Morgan from Colo Cox by Sergt Jones. The publick stores are so Exhausted that unless Paul Jones arrives soon I fear my Continuance here will be but of very little service, for when the few Cloathes, a few arms & accoutrements, some fix'd ammunition & about 20 compleat sett of Waggon Gear is gone, my prospects, unless a new Scene opens, are gone. But at all Events I'll do my best.

Again to the same, a month later:

Philadelphia Feby 18th 1781

Dr General

On the i8th of last month I had the honor to answer yours from the Cheraws of the 30th of December, since which your Dispatches announcing the Successes of part of your army detachd under Genl Morgan & Colo Washington has arrived & you'll permitt me to Congratulate you on the same and assure you that no man felt more real pleasure on the Occasion than myself especially as the Execution of your Orders was Committed to a man with whom I am Connected by the nearest Ties of Friendship & real

Esteem. The manifesto publish'd by him in the District of 96 is much admired and astonishes many who do not judge rightly where it originated. The intended and probably by this Time executed Operations on your left were too soon known here—we wait with Impatience for an account of the Event.

The Congress joined—Paul Jones is at last arrived, but I need not mention the other Intelligence to you as the Committee of Congress who correspond with you must do it.—I have with the assistance of Doctor Skinner gott cloathing for Lees Corps compleat as also Sadles and other accoutrements—the whole will be ready for transportation by the eighth of March next, when I shall send Doctor Skinner on with them, and an Invoice shall be sent you previous to their arrival.—I am now packing up about 2000 Coats 2000 shirts some Woollen & some Linnen Overalls and every moment expect a quantity of hunting shirts and Overalls from New Windsor—when the whole are collected they shall be forwarded on. We are much distressed for want of cash. I am obliged almost to attend the greasing of a Waggon and lend my servant to assist in packing & other Business for want of money in the Department to pay a Labourer. I am &c.

Genl Greene.

Febiger.

In March there was more activity, and several trains were started southward, the Board of War procuring wagons upon the following report made by Febiger:

March 7, 1781

Gentlemen

In Obedience to your Orders of yesterday I have particularly Examined the Stores of the different Departments exactly to determine the Number of Waggons wanting for the Transportation of the Supplies now on hand for the Southern army, as also Conferr'd with Colo Miles to determine the Sum absolutely wanted to enable him to procure ye Waggons immediately, a Report of which I inclose.

The Board will permit me to observe that several of the stores have been ready for some time and I have made timely application for Waggons. But the want of money and the Demands of the Marquis has rendered it impossible to procure them as yett—last Monday I attempted to load four waggons. But the Owners finding that they could gett no money immediately refus'd going. I find great Difficulty in the Clothier General's Department to gett the Goods properly Pack'd for transportation—upwards of 20 packages are now unfit to move and M. [Miles ?] complains it is for want of money or means to procure Workmen to do it. Would therefore beg leave to suggest the Necessity of something being done to remove the Difficulty, and have the honor to be, etc.—

The honble Board of War.

Febiger.

Fifty wagons, the Colonel reports, were needed and £1,552 in hard money. Part of these were soon forthcoming, and on the 20th a brigade of twelve wagons, with Bernard Hart as conductor, set out for the Southern Army. The names of all the drivers are again entered in Febiger's note book, with the number of packages and what they contained. There were carbines, pouches, swords, pistols, belts, shoes, haversacks, etc., for the Georgia militia, and flints, shot pouches, overalls, hunting shirts and shoes for Greene's men. The slings for the 26 drums in this invoice were "old bayonet belts, as no others could be had." On the next day another detachment of twelve wagons followed, under charge of Lieutenant Skinner of Lee's Partisan Legion, with supplies for that corps and the main army, including saddles, boots, forage bags, "correy combs" and clothing; wagon conductor, John Mulhallon. Lieutenant Skinner also took with him a dozen order books, paper, ink powder and wafers. March 23d went another brigade of fourteen wagons, conducted by John McLinn, with supplies for Greene, and fifty single barrels of powder for Virginia, deliverable to the order of Governor Jefferson; and again, March 27th, ten more wagons with pistols and cartridges and round, case and grapeshot. John Compy was conductor of the latter train, in regard to whom Colonel Febiger makes this novel memorandum: "I gave him a pointed route and very particular Directions with respect to his Conduct in every place and Situation, and not Conceiving him capable, I did not even leave him Room to abide by his own Judgment." This wagoner, it appears, was not one of his own selection. On March 28 we find the Colonel going down to Chester, Pennsylvania, to obtain goods for Virginia "from on board the French Frigate Hermione," and this is the last service of the kind that he mentions. On May 10, 1781, he left Philadelphia and proceeded to General Morgan's at Winchester, having been engaged for eight months in dispatching the sinews of war to the South. No one probably knew how much he had done or appreciated his services more than General Greene—a General whom he devotedly admired.

Febiger's subsequent career requires no very extended mention in the present sketch. The greater part of the time he was acting as recruiting officer in Virginia. Once or twice he was in the field again for brief periods. Among other experiences he seems to have assisted Morgan in suppressing the Tory insurrection in Hampshire county early in June, 1781. Then in July he acted with the Virginia militia, and for a short time commanded a body of newly raised Virginia Continentals in La Fayette's little army. It was his good fortune also to be present at the siege of Yorktown and witness the surrender of Cornwallis—a fitting and happy close for a career which began with Bunker Hill. At Yorktown, however, the Colonel was not actively in command of any troops, the single detachment of Virginia Continentals, some four hundred strong, being led by Lieutenant-Colonel Gaskins. In a letter to Washington at the close of the siege, Febiger describes himself as "Superintending officer of the Virginia line." Repairing to Cumberland Old Court House, the recruiting headquarters west of Richmond and south of the James, the Colonel was next engaged in organizing companies for a battalion to reinforce Greene in South Carolina. It proved a vexatious task, recruits coming in slowly, and no clothing or arms to equip them with. His varied duties and perplexities at this camp would alone form a curious and instructive chapter.

Finally, on January 1st, 1783, after nearly eight years of uninterrupted service, Colonel Febiger retired from active military duty, and on November 15th of the same year was discharged from the now disbanding Continental army. In the interval, September 30, 1783, Congress conferred upon him the rank of Brigadier-General by brevet. The title of General, however, he never assumed, as he tells a Danish correspondent at a later date that it is more to one's advantage in business matters in America to be known as "Colonel." Making Philadelphia his permanent home after the war, he engaged in trade, and carried on an extensive correspondence both throughout the States and abroad. Many of his business letters still reserved show a remarkable familiarity on his part with the needs and resources of the country. His correspondence with a merchant at Copenhagen, by the name of John Sobotker, is so full of information respecting the mercantile situation in our Northern States in 1785-6 that it may be regarded as of historical value. His knowledge was based largely on personal observation, as besides lesser trips he speaks of making journeys through New England to the coast of Maine, and up the Hudson to Lake Champlain, prospecting in lumber. It appears that Mr. Sobotker once suggested the appointment of Colonel Febiger as Danish Consul in the United States, but nothing came of this.

At the close of the war the Colonel became a member of the Virginia State Society of Cincinnati, but on removing to Philadelphia joined the Pennsylvania State Society. He never took any active part in its proceedings however. One of the annual gatherings is thus referred to in a letter to his old friend, Colonel Heth, of Virginia, August 17, 1786:

I have follow'd the Example of a great General at the Battle of Monmouth & performed a grand manoeuvre Retrograde—I am become from a nominal B: G: a private City Dragoon (*N. B:* in a Troop consisting of some of our best citizens) and as such I spent the last fourth of July with the Troop at the Cool Springs over Scuykill. The C. Cti. [Cincinnati Society] on the same day to the number of about 30 walked in Procession from the City Tavern to the Dutch Church in Street, where Major Jackson (late aid to General Lincoln) deliver'd a very clever Oration. A number of honorary members and others were invited to a Feast in the City Tavern at the expense of the real or contingent Fund of the Society (*N. B:* I believe the former for I have heard of no contingent fund here). They broke up about 3 o'clock in the morning. The Bill was moderate for the very expensive Article of Segars amounted only to £3—10—0.

Colonel Febiger was at various times a candidate for important civil offices. For a short time he held the position of Auctioneer of the Northern Liberties of Philadelphia, and upon Washington's election to the Presidency he was brought forward for the post of Naval Officer of the same place. This appointment he failed to receive, but soon after, on the 13th of November, 1789, he was elected Treasurer of the State of Pennsylvania, and held the office until his death in 1796. He leaves quite an amusing account of the electioneering and balloting upon the occasion, this being his first experience in political strategy. His old General, Peter Muhlenberg, managed the canvas for him in the Legislature, and after four ballots, or "heats," as he describes them, he was chosen by one majority. The duties of his responsible office, however, he administered with so much ability, application and integrity, that he was thereafter unanimously re-elected his own successor every year as long as he lived.

As a proper close to these biographical memoranda, we may add here the tribute of affection and respect inscribed over the Colonel's grave by one of his old companions in the war:

"In memory of Christian Febiger, Esq., who departed this life on the 20th day of September, 1796, in the 50th year of his age.

He was a native of Denmark, and served as an officer in the American army during the war with Great Britain; and at its conclusion commanded the Second Virginia Regiment. In the year 1789, he was appointed treasurer of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, which office he filled until the close of life. As an officer, he was beloved; as a citizen, he was esteemed and respected; as a friend, he was warm and sincere; and as a husband, tender and affectionate. In fine, his views were upright and his actions just. A brother soldier, who knew him well, offers this small tribute to his memory."

HENRY P. JOHNSTON

Note.—Colonel Febiger married Miss Elizabeth Carson, the daughter of a wealthy merchant in Philadelphia. She was occasionally with him in camp, as at Cumberland Old Court House, Virginia. The materials used in the preparation of this sketch are manuscripts in possession of Christian Febiger, Esq., of Wilmington, Delaware, and Colonel George L. Febiger, Assistant Paymaster General, U. S. A. Scattering letters from or to the Colonel are also to be found in the collections of the New York and other Historical Societies, and among General Greene's papers.

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